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SUBJECT: GOG AND OPPOSITION POINTS OF AGREEMENT

REF: A. TBILISI 304

[B](#). TBILISI 271

[C](#). TBILISI 229

[1](#). (SBU) Summary: The Georgian government took concrete steps on February 26 in addressing the opposition's concerns (Reftel A,B,C) by releasing three more "political prisoners," replacing the board of the Georgian Public Broadcasting Station, and officially stating that Parliamentary elections will be in May. On February 25, it passed two constitutional amendments officially creating the positions of regional governors and vice-premiers. However, Parliament postponed voting on a package of other draft laws, which previously had tentative agreement, such as lowering the election threshold, replacing the Central Election Commission (CEC) Chairman, and changing of the "first-past-the-post, winner-takes-all-system" until the final details could be agreed upon. End Summary.

Areas of Agreement

[2](#). (SBU) Release of Political Prisoners: On February 26, three more persons who were arrested in connection with the events of November 7 were released. This brings the number of those released to eleven. (Reftel B) The opposition's list of prisoners it wanted released ran to 30-40 people in total, some of them arrested for other reasons unrelated to November 7.

[3](#). (SBU) Public Television Board and Chairman: Parliament approved a nine-members non-partisan board of trustees for the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GBS) on February 26. Following the January 5 Presidential Election, the opposition demanded a new supervisory board with partisan balance for the GBS and the resignation of director general Tamar Kintsurashvili. The final board includes publisher Bakur Sulakauri; Tbilisi State University journalism professor Marina Vekua; singer Irma Sokhadze; historian Giorgi Anchabadze; film directors Irakli Tripolski; and Mikheil Chiaureli, audit company Chief Zurba Kharatishvili; university PR worker Levan Gakhedladze; and newspaper 24 Saati editor Mamuka Pachuashvili. Gia Tortladze of the opposition coalition said the opposition welcomes the new board and is ready to trust them. The opposition is now waiting for the board to select a new director general for the public broadcaster.

[4](#). (SBU) Election Date: Parliamentary elections will be held this May, according to a constitutional amendment which was passed unanimously by the Parliament on February 26. Opposition lawmakers also supported this amendment. The President now must set the exact date of the polls. President Saakashvili should announce the date no later than 60 days before the elections. The ruling National Movement Party has proposed to hold elections sometime between May 14-24.

(Reftel C)

¶5. (SBU) Constitutional Changes: Parliament unanimously passed on February 26 a number of constitutional amendments involving the status of regional governors and introduction of vice-premiers. Other amendments which have been passed are as follows:

- Introduction of governor's positions in the provincial regions. Heretofore, the President's special representatives have administered the regions, but until now were not codified in the Constitution. The position, which is under the President's subordination, will now be officially named as governor, who according to the Constitutional amendment, will be in charge of oversight of local self-governance bodies on behalf of the central authorities.

- Introduction of the first Vice-Premier and Vice Premiers in the cabinet. Currently, there is only one vice-premier, Giorgi Baramidze, who is also the state minister for Euro-Atlantic integration issues. According to the amendment, members of the cabinet can assume the position of the vice-premier meaning that no new members in the cabinet will be invited for that particular post.

Areas where Discussion Continues

¶6. (SBU) Parliament postponed voting on the following package of draft laws, due to a number of controversial constitutional amendments: extending Parliament's term of office from the current four to five years; increasing Presidential Powers which would further permit the president to disband the Parliament; abolishment of first-past-the-post winner takes all system (Reftel C); lowering of the election threshold from 7% to 5%; and the

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replacement of the CEC Chairman. (Reftel A,C)

Comment

¶7. (SBU) Overall, the willingness of the President and the ruling National Movement to cooperate on the passage of at least some of the amendments is an encouraging sign that a spirit of compromise is taking room in the wake of the political crisis.

TEFFT